Senator Michelle Hinchey Pushes for Bill to Increase Hospital Transparency and Improve Healthcare Access

MICHELLE HINCHEY   May 9, 2022

ALBANY, NY – Today, Senator Michelle Hinchey and Assemblymember Nily Rozic called for the State Legislature to pass their bill (S5400-Hinchey/A6334-Rozic), which would bring much needed transparency to the services New York hospitals provide, laying the groundwork to expand access to care in health care deserts across the state where many hospital closures and religious-affiliated mergers have resulted in the loss of reproductive care, end-of-life care, gender-affirming care, and other essential health services.

The bill, which has garnered the support of state and nationwide organizations, including the New York Civil Liberties Union, Planned Parenthood Action Fund and the National Institute for Reproductive Health, requires the NYS Department of Health to collect a list of unavailable health care services from each general hospital and publish that information, in an easily understandable format, on its website, ensuring that New Yorkers have the ability to determine whether their local hospital provides the care they need prior to admission. The legislation further requires the Department of Health to publicly report on how the denial of these services is impacting patients, with a focus on how access to care varies by community, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic position.

"It has never been more important to fight with everything we have to protect and expand health care in New York," **said Senator Michelle Hinchey.** "Hospitals across New York State are downsizing or closing at alarming rates, resulting in our already medically-underserved communities losing even more access to the healthcare services they need, specifically including reproductive care. This is an unacceptable reality, and our legislation will ensure that New Yorkers are informed about the services that are unavailable to them at their local hospital before it's too late. By identifying these critical gaps in service through this legislation, we will have the knowledge we need so that we can better fight to increase all healthcare services across New York and deliver the healthcare equity that our communities deserve.

"Recent attacks on abortion and health care access have laid bare how crucial hospital care is and how little we know about what care hospitals provides," **said Assemblywoman Nily Rozic.** "No patient should be denied the care they need simply because they had no way to know that their local hospital excluded certain procedures. This legislation will go a long way to ensure New Yorkers have access to the data they need in order to make informed decisions

about their health."

Gabriella Larios, Equal Justice Works Fellow at the New York Civil Liberties Union said, "New Yorkers are often unaware that their local hospital will not provide the health care they need. Denials of care are preventable and too often jeopardize people's lives and, in some cases, have proven deadly. With reproductive rights on the federal chopping block and states around the country attacking gender affirming care, New York state must pass legislation that requires hospital transparency to help identify health care deserts and ensure that people can get the information they need to make time-sensitive and important health care decisions."

Danielle Castaldi-Micca, Vice President of Political and Government Affairs at the National Institute for Reproductive Health Action Fund said, "With unprecedented attacks on abortion access, we need to make sure that New Yorkers have real, meaningful access to reproductive health care – and that starts with ensuring that everyone who wants or needs that care has the tools to determine where they can find it. We thank Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Rozic for sponsoring A.6344/S.5400, which will require the Department of Health to collect and publish a list of banned healthcare services – including abortion care – from each hospital. The legislation further requires the Department of Health to report how the denial of these services impacts patients, with a particular focus on how access to care varies by community, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This is a critical step in protecting reproductive health care in New York – and we encourage the legislature to pass this bill immediately."

Arthur Butler, Executive Director of the Schenectady County Human Rights Commission and co-chair of the Schenectady Coalition for Healthcare Access said, "The Healthcare Transparency Act helps to move the conversation from the private boardrooms to the streets. The current

atmosphere provided communities a birds eye view into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of our healthcare systems and those who run them. This bill would empower community members with the necessary mechanisms to assess whether their needs are being met by their local hospitals. Bill A.6334/S.5400 will provide New Yorkers an opportunity to hold local hospitals accountable for meeting the needs of its communities. Health is not a commodity, it is a right. The human rights of the patient are fundamental to enjoying a life of dignity. Universal health care is crucial should always include those most marginalized."

Georgana Hanson, interim President and CEO of Planned Parenthood Empire State Acts said, "Consumers and patients are often unaware that their hospital may not provide, or may deny, certain types of medical care based on factors that are not rooted in public health or the best interests of the patient. At Planned Parenthood, we know that the delivery of patient-centered care means that patients are informed of their rights, options, and have the ability to make decisions in consultation with their providers. Greater consumer transparency in our hospital systems is critical as New Yorkers continue to navigate a pandemic, and an upending of reproductive rights and access to abortion care across the country. We should all have the right to know whether or not the care we need is available at the hospital nearby, and our communities deserve to know the impact of any disparities in care availability."

Since 2003, more than 40 community hospitals in New York State have closed. As a result, large health care systems now control more than 70 percent of hospital beds in the state, and hospital takeovers in New York continue. Because information about what care hospitals provide is often difficult to obtain, patients cannot determine whether their local hospital provides the care they need and which services may have been lost in a merger. Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Rozic are championing the passage of S5400/A6334 in both

houses before the State Legislative Session concludes on June 2nd.

Supporters of S5400 include:

- New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)

- National Institute for Reproductive Health

- Planned Parenthood Action Fund

- National Women's Law Center

- Columbia County Democratic Committee Reproductive Health Care Workgroup

- American Atheists

- BKForge: Brooklyn for Reproductive and Gender Equity

- Compassion and Choices

- Jews for Secular Democracy

- National Center for Transgender Equality/NCTE Action Fund

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S5400

- Introduced

- ○ In Committee Assembly

- - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly

  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly

  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Relates to providing information to patients and the public on policy-based exclusions

March 03, 2021

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Michelle Hinchey

Do you support this bill?